

A Review of the 2005 Tornado Season

By Brian LaMarre

Warning Coordination Meteorologist
National Weather Service – Lubbock, TX

After a record-breaking hurricane season delivered devastating impacts across portions of the Gulf coastal states, 2005 will long be remembered as a year with high impact weather events. Among the significant weather events to impact the United States were the outbreaks of tornadoes across the area of responsibility serviced by the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Lubbock.

The following counties represent the Lubbock County Warning and Forecast Area:

Parmer, Castro, Swisher, Briscoe, Hall, Childress
Bailey, Lamb, Hale, Floyd, Motley, Cottle
Cochran, Hockley, Lubbock, Crosby, Dickens, King
Yoakum, Terry, Lynn, Garza, Kent, Stonewall

The 1990-2005 average number of tornado occurrences across the area is between 17 and 18. During the highly active 2005 severe weather season, 26 tornadoes were reported to the Lubbock National Weather Service office by dedicated teams of trained storm spotters, storm chasers, local media, emergency and first response officials, NWS employees and members of the general public.

During the month of May 2005, 9 tornadoes were reported. During the month of June 2005, 17 tornadoes were reported. The dates of May 12th and 13th; and June 9th, 11th, and 12th all recorded tornadoes.

Of the 24 counties mentioned above, 9 were impacted by tornado occurrences:

Lamb, Lubbock, Cottle, Crosby, Dickens, Floyd, Hale, Swisher, and Kent.

On average, a severe thunderstorm season spans a three month period between April and June with a peak in frequency during the months of May and June. As the weather pattern evolves in late Summer and early Fall, an additional, less pronounced, peak in frequency can be measured surrounding our climatologically favored northwest-flow and nocturnal thunderstorm events.

The 2005 severe thunderstorm and tornado season was one of the most active on record – second only to the season ten years ago in 1995 when 41 tornadoes were reported. However, the 2005 season was significant in comparison due to the fact many of the tornadoes resulted in extensive structural damage and received, accordingly, higher ratings on the Fujita tornado damage scale.

The following are dates of tornado occurrences rated above F0 damage :

May 12, 2005

F3 in Crosby county – Ralls, TX

F2 in Crosby county – Ralls, TX

F2 in Floyd county – South Plains, TX

June 9, 2005

F3 in Floyd county – McCoy, TX area

F1 in Hale county – Petersburg, TX area

June 12, 2005

F2 in Kent county – Clairemont, TX area

In addition to the many tornadoes reported across the area, severe thunderstorms produced very large hail and high wind gusts across the area...resulting in destructive impacts to personal property and agricultural interests.

Largest hail – 4.25 inches – between Grapefruit and Softball size

May 9th in Floyd county

May 12th in Floyd county

May 31st in Floyd county

August 27th in Bailey county

Highest wind gusts

April 20th in Hall county – 89 mph gust measured by storm chaser equipment.

June 5th in Kent county – 75 mph gust measured by the Texas Tech/West Texas Mesonet.

Despite a volatile severe weather season that produced a full spectrum of severe thunderstorm hazards, there were no fatalities. The National Weather Service has a team of experts working 24 hours a day, each and every day, to provide the best possible service to the public. Our success is the result of a team effort.

The life-saving warnings and related information issued by the National Weather Service is part of an extensive integrated warning system. This system is successful through local relationships with our emergency response community, media broadcasters, trained SkyWarn spotters, general public observers, the West Texas Mesonet Group of Texas Tech University, and the many amateur radio operators and energetic storm chasers who provide critical ground-truth information. It is an extensive network in place for the sole purpose of protecting life and property.

The National Weather Service wishes you all the best for 2006!